

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. 68-4-57

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Charles Earl House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4715 Oliver Street

not for publication

city, town Riverdale

vicinity of

congressional district

5

state Maryland

county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u> </u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture
<u> </u> building(s)	<u> </u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> </u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government
	<u> </u> being considered	<u> </u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial
	<u> </u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<u> </u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<u> </u> military
			<u> </u> museum
			<u> </u> park
			<u> </u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<u> </u> religious
			<u> </u> scientific
			<u> </u> transportation
			<u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name R. Dan & Karen Ritchie

street & number 4715 Oliver Street

telephone no.:

city, town Riverdale

state and zip code Maryland 20737

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse

liber 4634

street & number 14735 Main Street

folio 688

city, town Upper Marlboro

state Maryland 20772

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date

 federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Charles Earl house stands at 4715 Oliver Street (south side - formerly Washington Street), Tax Map 42, Block 54, Lot 10, Riverdale, Maryland. The property was purchased by Charles Earl in 1893 from the Riverdale Park Company, and the house was erected in 1894, as indicated by the tax assessment records of 1893-1894, showing a large increase in valuation by 1894.

The house is in the Queen Anne Victorian style (1880-1910) and consists of a 2 ½ story structure with north front gabled roof and east and west side cross gables. The house contains a full basement, and the typical wrap around porch on the north and west facades, consistent with the Queen Anne style. The house currently has bright blue aluminum siding with a clapboard appearance, white board window surrounds, & black shutters. The front door is black with white board surrounds and appears in the third bay of the three-bay north gable end. The porch includes black square post roof supports with black railing and white spindles.

Extending from the cross gable on the west facade is an extension wing shaped into a cutaway bay window on the first level, with rectangular overhang on the second level. This extension wing is the same width as the cross gable in the west roof, but the gable ends at the west wall of the main structure and the wing features a flat roof with eaves. The L-shaped porch extends on the west facade as far as the extension wing, where a second entry door is located.

The east facade of the house features a second cross gable and very short wall extension. The primary feature of this cross gable is a porch with a shed roof extending out on the lower level. The back (south facade) of the house contains a second porch extension with shed roof. The roof features two chimneys in line with interior fireplaces.

The exterior of this house is on at least its third remodeling since the original construction. The current owners, Dan and Karen Ritchie, report the exterior was newly refinished in 1989, and that prior to the blue exterior with white and black trim now on the house, the house had been covered with "old Army green asbestos siding."

The Ritchies were kind enough to invite one survey team member inside so we were able to acquire details on the interior of the house as well. The house had been altered on the interior, sometime prior to the Ritchies' acquisition in 1976, to include a lower level private apartment with a separate entrance. (See attached floor plans)

The house is entered through the front door in the north facade main gable. A brief entry hall is separated from the main hall by double doors. To the immediate left inside the hall is the living room, probably the Earl family parlor. This room has two entrance doors, one facing due west, the second on a south-west angle. Both doors feature decorative arched entryways. The room features two north-facing windows and a fireplace on the east wall. The hall continues from the front door into the center of the home where it angles off to the left (east) to approach the stairway and the entrance to the dining room.

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Description (continued)

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The dining room features a second fireplace and the doorway to the east porch, which the current owners have glassed in on all sides to create a kind of observatory, where a number of very healthy looking plants now reside. A door on the south side of the porch opens to an outdoor deck built by the Ritchies. The kitchen is entered through the south wall of the dining room, and it extends to the back of the house.

The dining room and kitchen have been reduced in size by construction of internal walls to create the private apartment, which consists of a living room/bedroom combination, a kitchen, a bathroom and a walk-in closet. The apartment is accessed by the front door in the west extension wing and the porch at the back of the house.

The stairway in the main hall is split with the first half going due east, turning on a center landing, and finishing in a westerly direction. The second level contains a central hall, four bedrooms and a bathroom. Two large bedrooms open, respectively, to the left and right at the top of the stairs. The master bedroom encompasses the entire north side of the house. The second bedroom occupies the east central part of the house over the dining room. The hallway at the top of the stairs features pull-down attic stairs in the ceiling and a linen closet. The hall turns 90 degrees and follows the length of the house on the west side. Opening from the hall, a door leads to a small bedroom in the west extension wing, currently being used as a nursery. At the back of the house, the hall turns 90 degrees to the east and a south door opens into a bathroom. The hall ends in the door to the fourth bedroom. All bedrooms have had closets built in. The house has obviously settled in the southeast corner as one has a definite sense of walking downhill proceeding down the hall and into the fourth bedroom.

The interior of the house has been altered by use of wood paneling, brick wall covering and various wallpapers. The current owners have done some very pleasing remodeling work with wallpapers and stenciling reminiscent of the Victorian era in the central hall, living and dining rooms. Most interior doors and windows retain the original wood moulding, with groove patterned baseboard and surrounds and simple medallion patterned corner blocks. Many of the interior doors, especially upstairs, feature glass transoms. Standing radiators, probably original to the house, continue to be the primary heat source. The house contains a full basement described by the owner as partially finished with a "rat slab" concrete finish in the remainder.

The house itself gives clues as to its original condition. In the dining room, investigation of the west wall indicates it is a later addition, as it covers over part of the original moulding on the dining room door, and leaves the fireplace oddly non-centered in the room. A ceiling medallion in the dining room indicates where a lamp would have been hung. This medallion serves as an additional clue to the alteration of the house as it doesn't appear in the center of the room as it is currently configured. The kitchen also, in its current configuration, is far too small to represent the Victorian era.

Charles Earl's will includes a property inventory listing household carpets from which we may infer that the original structure included the hall, parlor (now probably the living room) dining room, sitting room, stair, four bedrooms and kitchen. The apartment has (in the estimation of the survey team) taken over the sitting room, part of the dining room, and part of the kitchen. The attached floor plan sketches of the house indicate the house as it exists today, and how the first floor may have been originally configured. Further research into interior construction details may provide additional information as to the original configuration of the house, and additional restoration and remodeling work could be performed to restore the essence of the Victorian house, if its current owners desired to do so. The external remodeling is very much in keeping with turn-of-the-century styles, and provides a very pleasing appearance. The Ritchies hope to add additional Victorian trim details at some future time.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> scienc
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify

Specific dates ca, 1894

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Earl House is a good example of a late Victorian Queen Anne style dwelling. This style of house is typical to the turn-of-the-century Washington, D.C. suburb of Riverdale Park.

The land on which this suburb was built, had been part of the Riversdale plantation from 1801, when Henri Joseph Stier, a Belgian aristocrat, had purchased approximately 800 acres north of Bladensburg, and had begun to develop his plantation. After Stier's return to Belgium in 1803, completion of the Riversdale mansion and management of the plantation were taken over by his daughter and her husband, Rosalie and George Calvert. The Riversdale plantation became a model of its type, and remained in Calvert family possession for three generations.¹ After the death in 1864 of Charles Benedict Calvert (son of George and Rosalie Calvert), a commission was appointed to divide the plantation among his heirs; a 300 acre dower lot, including the mansion and the family burial ground to the northwest, was laid off for Calvert's widow.² This 300 acre dower lot (as well as the 175 acre lot adjoining it on the north) was sold in 1887 by the Calvert heirs to John Fox, president of the Riverdale Park Company, a New York real estate syndicate which then began development of the suburb of Riverdale Park.³ The land was platted in 1889 by surveyor D.J. Howell. Streets were laid out in a grid pattern, straddling the Washington line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which ran north and south through the new community, and offered to residents easy commuting into the Federal City. Park spaces, and circles of green were provided in the plan, and parkland was reserved around the Calvert mansion which was preserved "as a sacred relic of an era replete with historic memories."⁴ Streets were named for the Presidents of the United States, Washington through McKinley, as well as for other distinguished statesmen such as Clay, Lafayette and Beale.⁵

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Statement of Significance (continued)

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Construction of dwellings began in the 1890's. All were of frame construction, and reflected the popular taste of the period, as illustrated in the house plan catalogs of those years. Some were pyramidal-roof Foursquares, others front-gabled or cross-gabled; many were highlighted by projecting bays or corner towers,, and almost all had prominent wraparound porches with jigsaw decorative detail. By the turn of the century, the new suburb had approximately 60 dwellings, a Presbyterian Church, a handsome Victorian Schoolhouse and railroad station; the latter two public buildings were built by the Riverdale Park Company. There were several general stores, and telegraph and telephone communication was available. Concrete sidewalks were constructed, and sewers were provided for the principal streets.⁶ Because of its convenient location, its efficient line of transportation into the city, its primary school, and its picturesque tree-lined streets, Riverdale Park became one of the most desirable residential suburbs in the Washington area.

The Earl House was built in the mid 1890's on Lot 10 of Block 54, fronting on Washington Street, (presently Oliver Street), just west of the Calvert mansion. Washington Street was laid out along the line leading from the Washington Baltimore Turnpike eastward to the Calvert mansion. Charles Earl purchased lots 9 and 10 from the Riverdale Park Company in 1893. The house was soon erected thereafter on lot 10, it being completed by the tax assessments of 1894. Charles Earl died in 1898, leaving the house to his wife, Katie, and his son, Charles Jr., who sold the house in 1914.

Charles Earl and Charles Earl Jr. were both prominent men within the community, the latter having known to have been a lawyer. Both father and son held mortgages themselves, or in cooperation with Joseph Blundon, on numerous properties within the subdivision. One of these properties mortgaged by Earl was the property next door belonging to the eldest Earl's neice and her family. Both of these houses were represented in the Riverdale Park Company real estate brochure of the earl 1900's.

The Earl House is still a noticeable house within the town of Riverdale, representing the suburbs of the past. In conjunction with the Wilson and Smith houses on the same south side of the street, the Earl House is significant as a good representation of the transportation suburbs of the turn of the century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

Zone Easting Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing
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[illegible]

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F U L L L L L L

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H l l l l l l

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name	Michelle Nebel
title	Susan E. Ewing, Historic Preservation Students University of Maryland

organization _____ date December, 1989 _____

street & number _____ telephone Michele Nebel (301) 924-1140

city or town _____ state _____

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438